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THE HONEYSUCKLE.

BY METTA V. VICTOR.

"A thing of beauty is a joy forever."

PART FIRST.

It covers the ancient castle
Over all its southern wall;
It makes for itself a trestle
Of arch and battlement tall;
It waves from the lofty turret—
It swings from the stately tower—
It curtains the grim old castle
As fair as a lady's bower.
At the time of the midnight wassail,
At the time of mirth and wine,
I seek no other pleasure
Than to look on the royal vine—
It brims my soul with the measure
Of a happiness divine.

I sit without, in the meadow;
The trees sing low and sweet,
The tremulous light and shade
Play all around my feet;
I am full of summer fancies,
I breathe the breath of flowers,
I see the river that glances
Beneath the castle-towers;
I hear the wild-bee's story,
I see the roses twine—
But the crown of all, and the glory,
Is the Honeysuckle-vine!

'Tis the type and ideal of summer,
Tropical, brilliant, serene!
It shelters the light-winged comer
In a cool and wavy screen;
It is full of vague, soft noises,
Sweeter than sweetest rhymes,
Than insects' murmurous voices,
Finer than fairy-bell chimes;
It is the queen and the wonder
Of all the vines that grow,
And the stately elms stand under,
Surprised to see it so.
It floats in the yellow sunshine—
It swims in the rosy light—
It dreams in the mellow moonshine
Through all the August night.
It is still when the breeze is quiet,
It moves not leaf nor limb—
And oh, what a wild, sweet riot
It holds along with him!
They dance together proudly,
A gay, ethereal dance,
And the happy breeze laughs loudly
As its garments rustle and glance!

I cannot tell the fancies
Which crowd my brain at times,
Nor the soft, delicious trances
Beguiling my thought to rhymes:—
If I love the Honeysuckle,
I have rivals many and true;
The bee his belt doth buckle
And sharpen his small-sword, too.—
He will sting me if I go nearer—
He will swear he has kissed her lips—
That nectar never was clearer
Than the honey-dew he sips.

The humming-bird, he will tell me
He has lain in her breast for hours;
The butterfly seeks to repel me
With his wings like living flowers.
And the bright sun doth adore her—
He is my rival brave;
He bows his torch before her
Like some gay-appareled slave.
He lights the million tapers
Which burn upon her shrine,
He dries the morning vapors
Which will not let them shine.
Her praise to heaven she renders
With golden lamps all trimmed;
They blaze with crimson splendors,
By even the day undimmed.

These are not tapers, clearly
That burn upon the vine—
I see them now more nearly
As beakers full of wine!
They are goblets, rich and golden,
Ruby and garnet-rimmed,
By all its branches holden
And with royal nectar brimmed.
Aye! filled with juices amber,
Which ripen in the flower,
For which bright insects clamber
To the turret and the tower.
The wild-bee swims in blisses,
The small bird drinks his fill—
They vow and sigh—'oh, this is
The draught the gods distil!—
They distil it out of heaven
Into these goblets fine—
Let us drink from morn till even—
Let us madden us with wine,
The ambrosial, the divine!"

PART SECOND.

It covers the ancient castle
Over all its southern wall;
It makes for itself a trestle
Of arch and battlement tall;
It is rooted deep with the basement,
It rises high with the towers,
It curtains a certain casement—
And there is my lady's bower!
With a graceful, sweeping motion
There parteth the leafy screen—
In its wavy and murmurous ocean
Like a pearl is my lady seen.
No wonder the vine drops amber
Which the honey-bees love to hive!
It was planted to shade the chamber
Of the fairest creature alive
Its holy and blissful duty—
The sweetest that ever was done—
Is to shadow her virgin beauty
From the eye of the amorous sun.

I know why the birds crowd thither
To sing and exult all day,
While the roses and violets wither,
Unsung, in the gardens, away.
I know why the bees are drunken—
In pleasure lapped and rolled,—
Why the humming-birds' breasts are sunken
So deep in those cups of gold!
It's not that they hold their wassail
In the crimson, nectarine flower—
They see the pearl of the castle,
They peer in her maiden bower!

Oh, toss your flowers in the sunlight!
Distil your honey-wine!
Wave, wave your limbs in the moonlight,
Glorious, aspiring vine!
Yours is the coveted pleasure
Of guarding the costly shrine—
But the bitter, bitter measure
Of idle envy is mine.

I lie in the oak-tree shadow
The drowsy, summer day,
In the rippling grass of the meadow
I idle my time away:
The wine and feast are untasted,
The labor never is done—
With heart and body wasted,
I lie in the shade and sun.
Like a bird in its leafy covering,
She flits about her room;
I see her fair form hovering
Between the light and gloom:
She comes to the window, singing,
She plucks a peeping flower—
Through all my being is ringing
Her song's unconscious power.
She shakes the saucy butterfly
From off the fragrant bough—
And I am conquered utterly,
By the mirth which dimples now
Her rosy mouth and cheek,
And brightens over her brow.
Oh, would I dared to speak!
Oh, would I were the blossom
That waves so near her hair—
She might pluck me for her bosom
And let me perish there!

I am mad with too much longing—
And wild with too much thought!
Blest birds, around her thronging,
Sing on, I heed you not!
Oh, why was I born human,
With a man's spirit and mind,
And she, a peerless woman,
The queen of all her kind?
These woody fibres feel not
The thrill of nerves on fire—
Those veins of nectar reel not
With love, hope, or desire!
Yet I can see them yearning
To hear her careless speech,
And I can see them turning
Her loveliest cheeks to reach!
Oh, twine then over the castle!—
In wreaths and masses twine!
I am only a stupid vassal
To lie in the grass and pine
And wish my fate were thine,
Thou happy, royal Vine!

THE CHILD'S GARDEN.

BENEATH the budding lilacs,
A little maiden sighed;
The first flower in her garden
That very morn had died,

For, though time brings us roses,
And golden fruits beside,
We've all some desert garden
Where life's first primrose died.